

Twitter Thread by Omar Bazza



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[THREAD] I want to revisit a topic I get asked about almost everyday. Physical symptoms in mental health. They are so scary and can be so hard to believe that something like anxiety can cause such devastating symptoms. Let's break it down and see how that happens.

Generally speaking, mental health symptoms are divided into 3 distinct categories: physical, psychological and social. Psychological would be racing thoughts, intrusive thoughts. Social is withdrawal from loved ones and other social symptoms.

Physical symptoms are definitely those that feel that we notice the most because they can look like potentially dangerous illnesses. Usually, we experience those symptoms, go to the emergency room, and the doctors can't find anything.

It leaves us feeling puzzled and wondering what's happening. What happens is that our mind identifies some type of danger. After that, it is time for the endocrine system to start working. It releases hormones that send signals to our body.

These hormones (cortisone, adrenaline) tell our body to prepare to fight or run away. Blood goes to our muscles, meaning our brain doesn't have enough blood pumping. That's why we feel that brain fog, racing thoughts, tunnel vision and we get that burst of energy.

We hyperventilate to get oxygen quickly so it becomes harder to take deeper breaths. We start to feel short of breath. Our heart is pumping in preparation for that danger ahead. We may feel palpitations and even some chest tightness. Our muscles contract a lot.

That means that we will get very sore or pain in our muscles from repeated panic attacks. These symptoms all combine to create a big monster that makes us panic even more. So how do we break this pattern?

Deep breaths: I mentioned the hyperventilating above. We need to cut it at the source. By forcing ourselves to take deep belly breaths, our heart rate goes down and the shortness of breath slowly goes away. Then, it is about releasing that energy.

Given that adrenaline and cortisone create a lot of energy to prepare for that danger. We are left feeling restless. Taking a small walk or run after the panic attack is done allows us to get rid of some of that jittery energy.

It is important to remember that panic attacks rely on us fearing the next one. As long as we fear them, they will keep coming back. When we understand why they are happening and how we can control them a bit more, we slowly lose that fear.

That means they won't come back as often. Furthermore, we often associate physical symptoms with mental health problems. But actually, any strong emotion can trigger physical symptoms. When we feel overly happy, angry, in love, we have physical symptoms as well.

The interconnected nature of the body and mind doesn't happen just in mental illness but also when we are feel overly happy or excited. It is just that we don't pay as much attention to it when we are happy.

The excitement of opening a gift we have been waiting for, a first kiss, etc...also leave us having a strong heart rate, hyperventilating and similar symptoms to panic attacks. Hope that helps a little with that connection and how we can manage it a little.